ANSMN 33 (1988)
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WERE COUNTERFEIT BRITISH STYLE HALFPENCE DATED 1785 MADE SPECIFICALLY FOR AMERICAN USE?

(PLATES 24–25)

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It is over a century since Wyllys Betts in 1886 brought to the attention of the numismatic public the existence in the Yale College collection of a counterfeit British style halfpence dated 1785.[1] The date on that counterfeit is not only ten years after the date of the last prior minting of genuine British halfpence in 1775 but is the same year as the first franchised coinage of any American state (Vermont and Connecticut) as well as the same year as the experimental IMMUNE COLUMBIA and CONFEDERATIO coinages. The 1785 date is also the identical year the copper CONSTELLATIO NOVA production coinage was first shipped to America whether dated 1785 or 1783, the first evidence of circulation being early in 1786.[2]

The research by Betts was presented in New York to the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society (now the American Numis-

[1] The word counterfeit(s) as used herein means counterfeit(s) made for general public circulation when pieces they imitated were current and does not mean forgeries made to deceive collectors or copies made as souvenirs.

[2] Eric P. Newman, "The Source of the Nova Constellatio Copper Coinage," *The Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine* 26 (1960), p. 7; "Morris Blazes Trail with Patterns," *The Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine* 38 (1972), p. 602.

matic Society) and was subsequently published.[3] The address outlined the significance of counterfeit British style halfpence in America and asserted that certain varieties were minted in America.

While there was only one variety of the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence in the Yale collection,[4] five varieties struck from three obverse dies and three reverse dies can now be described (Plate 24, 50-52, 85A-C). These three pairs of dies are very similar, the same letter and number punches having been used to make all of them. The same obverse device punch was used to make the counterfeit obverse dies with which the reverses dated 1785 were used, and the same reverse device punch was used to make the counterfeit reverse dies dated 1785. The 1785 halfpence show no American insignia or legends and have no distinctive characteristics except the date. They are not known to be muled with any other dies. One reverse die (85A, see Catalogue below) has a crudely cut British Union on the shield but on each of the other two reverse dies the British Union is indicated but not completed. On the obverses the hair of George III behind the laurel wreath is in a layer of curls, one below the other, somewhat like the genuine British halfpence dated from 1770 through 1775.

For the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence to be accepted as part of the early American coinage series requires convincing evidence. It is not as readily proven as the Machin's Mills coinage of counterfeit halfpence which had some of its dies muled with dies carrying American insignia or legends and which were coined by a known enterprise.[5] As early as 1875, S. S. Crosby was well aware of counterfeit halfpence and their muling with dies he described as having American legends, but it took almost 100 years for the wholly British style, American made pieces to be widely accepted as American coins through additional research and findings.

[3] Wyllys Betts, *Counterfeit Half Pence Current in the American Colonies and Their Issue from the Mints of Connecticut and Vermont* (New York, 1886).

[4] The 1785 and other counterfeit British style halfpence mentioned by Betts were apparently donated to Yale College between 1863 and 1886 since none of them are included among American or British coins in Henry Champion, *Catalogue of the Cabinet of Coins Belonging to Yale College* (New Haven, 1863).

[5] Sylvester S. Crosby, *The Early Coins of America* (Boston, 1875), pp. 191–202, published copies of two Machin's Mills partnership documents.

Positive proof is more convincing than circumstantial evidence, but sometimes only circumstantial evidence is available. Circumstantial evidence may consist of the elimination by negative findings of all but one alternative. For the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence to be classified specifically for American use involves proving that all other reasonable alternatives should be discarded.

It must first be recognized that no self-respecting counterfeiter would put a date far into the future on products intended for prompt circulation, so the existence of such counterfeit halfpence dated 1785 confirms that those coins were produced not earlier than late 1784 for 1785 circulation or actually in 1785. The American made British style coinage makes it clear that backdating counterfeit coppers was sometimes practiced just as it was in Great Britain, but there was usually a convenient or furtive reason for backdating. Backdating to the year 1785 at a later date has no justifiable motive.

The small quantity of genuine British halfpence coined during the reign of George III prior to American Independence was grossly inadequate for the needs of the British public and was produced at the Royal Mint in London from 1770 through 1775. This insufficiency resulted in enormous quantities of counterfeit British halfpence being struck in Great Britain by private coiners with these pieces readily receiving public acceptance. This was a practice which had taken place extensively during the reign of George II due to the lack of enforcement of the law against copper coin counterfeiting and a failure of the Royal Mint to increase its output. Counterfeiting increased during the reign of George III. There was a substantial profit in coining copper for any public or private minter. It had been a normal commercial practice to export and use for circulation in Colonial America quantities of counterfeit British halfpence. After the 1783 Treaty of Paris closing the American Revolution, exports of counterfeit British halfpence from Great Britain to America increased until hampered by the American gluts of 1785, 1787, and 1789. British counterfeiters had dated a few of their pieces 1776, 1777, or 1781 but usually backdated the coins to 1775, the last year of genuine British halfpence production.[6]

[6] Eric P. Newman, "American Circulation of English and Bungtown Halfpence," *Studies on Money in Early America* (New York, 1976), pp. 134–72.

The first evidence of counterfeit British halfpence struck in the United States was published in the *Providence Gazette* of April 17, 1784, where it was stated that such halfpence were coined in southern Massachusetts. The source of the one known variety of a counterfeit British style halfpence dated 1784 (Vlack 14-84A)[7] is attributed to the locale of North Swansea, Massachusetts. That coin displays obviously unskilled workmanship compared to British made counterfeits. Other halfpence were cast as well. There was a criminal case involving counterfeit halfpence in Philadelphia in September 1783, but these pieces were cast by pressing circulated halfpence (genuine or counterfeit) into sand to make the molds and were thus not comparable in quality or quantity to die struck coinage.[8]

To attempt to establish whether the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence was specifically for American use requires one of two alternatives to be established:

1. that the 1785 coinage was struck in the United States; or

2. that the 1785 coinage was struck in Great Britain specifically for shipment to and use in the United States, whether ordered by an American merchant(s) or intended to be sold to an American merchant(s) after production.

No evidence that 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence were struck in the United States has been located. The die work on the 1785 pieces seems far superior to American abilities of that period. Betts did not draw any conclusions as to whether the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpenny in the Yale collection was struck in the United States, but would have if he had had any evidence. He merely illustrated the coin as no. 4 and said it was similar to a 1775 counterfeit British halfpenny which he illustrated as no. 3.[9] An attempt was made recently to tie some letter punches used on the 1785 counterfeit dies to letter punches used on dies for some Connecticut coppers, but in each situation the

[7] Robert A. Vlack, "Early English Counterfeit Halfpence Struck in America," photocopied ms with two plates.

[8] Newman (above, n. 6), p. 156.

[9] Betts (above, n. 3), p. 4.

punches differ,[10] and no connection with American struck coinage has been found.

The legends on the genuine and counterfeit George III halfpence of the first type, regardless of date, have the letter R punched in twice on each obverse die and once on each reverse die. In the counterfeit 1785 halfpence dies designated herein as 50 and 85A each R has complete serifs on each side of the left base. On the coins struck from the two other pairs of counterfeit 1785 halfpence dies parts of the R punch appear to have broken off, resulting in each R on each of those dies having a developing defect. Not only is the right serif on the left base of each such R broken off, but a small part of the adjoining lower right side of the left upright of the R is broken away, first leaving a horizontal line in the fracture on dies 51 and 85B and later breaking in a diagonal up the right on dies 52 and 85C.

A recent search of quantities of British and Irish counterfeit halfpence by Mike Ringo of Albany, New York, turned up a break in the R on an obverse brockage of a counterfeit George III long hair Irish halfpence identical to those on obverse 51 and reverse 85B of the counterfeit 1785 British halfpence (Plate 25). There is no reverse on the Irish piece to show a date but the dates of genuine Irish issues having that type of obverse are 1775, 1776, 1781, and 1782 and the issues were struck at the Royal Mint in London. Irish style counterfeits for each of these dates as well as 1783 are known. The Irish brockage and the 1785 dated counterfeit British halfpence also share the same punches for other letters used in making those dies. Since the counterfeiter of the British halfpence

[10] Gary Trudgen, technical note 104, *Colonial Newsletter* 71 (Oct. 1985), p. 913.

dated 1785 made the one pair of dies, 50–85A, before the R punch broke and cut the other dies with the same punch during its developing fracture, then the Irish style counterfeit obverse was cut about 1785 by the same counterfeiting enterprise. Thus it is safe to conclude that the dies used for the counterfeit halfpence dated 1785 were cut in the British Isles and not in America. In sum, "alternative 1" must therefore ruled out.

If 1785 counterfeit halfpence were coined in the British Isles for British distribution and use and subsequently some of those were sent to America either coincidentally or for commercial advantage the 1785 pieces would be in the same category as hundreds of such counterfeits of various dates and would not be exclusively American. The 1785 pieces would then be foreign items, some of which circulated in America, and would not satisfy "alternative 2." However evidence points to the fact that no distribution, circulation or use in Great Britain ever occurred.

PUBLISHED BRITISH DATA

D. T. Batty, a coin and curio dealer who lived in Manchester, England, is the primary key to the solution of the problem. Batty was a vigorous collector of British, Irish, and British Colonial copper coins. He undertook to study and publish an accurate description of every variety in that grouping, volume 1 of his work being published in 1868.[11] He then stated that his own collection had 10,000 different varieties of such coppers. When volume 2 was published in 1877 he stated he had accumulated 15,000 different varieties; by 1886 in volume 3 he announced a rise to 25,000, finally reaching 35,000 varieties by 1890. In addition his compilation included details from "the most celebrated collections." After Batty's death volume 4 was completed by Frederick George Lawrence in 1898 using the remaining portions of Batty's manuscript to bring the listing through the Victorian Jubilee Year of 1887, although the eighteenth century portion concerning George III British style copper coinage had been completed by Batty himself.

[11] D. T. Batty, *Batty's Catalogue of the Copper Coinage of Great Britain, Ireland, British Isles and Colonies,* 4 vols. (Manchester, 1868–98).

Batty included counterfeit pieces as well as genuine pieces. The obverse and the reverse of each variety of each date of each copper denomination were casually described. There were almost no illustrations and no measurements. There were no categories or classifications of British style halfpence by other than denomination and date.

In volume 3 genuine and counterfeit British halfpence are described. The following Table gives the number of listings of such pieces of certain dates to demonstrate the extent of the coverage and to compare it to the number of genuine varieties described in a modern compilation by C. Wilson Peck[12] and thus to show the extent of the inclusion of counterfeit pieces in Batty's listing. This compilation includes only standard legend halfpence and does not include "evasion" halfpence with abnormal legends because Batty apparently relied upon James Atkins to publish that separate category of about 450 varieties.[13] Atkins could not resist listing both a 1778 and a 1787 counterfeit British style halfpence with standard legends (these were struck at Machin's Mills near Newburgh, NY) because of the "evasion" nature of their dates, but there are no evasion halfpence in the Atkins list having a date of 1784, 1785, or 1786.

Quantities of Halfpence Varieties in Batty and Peck

Dates with Potential American Significance Found on Genuine and Counterfeit Halfpence	*Number of Genuine and Counterfeit Halfpence Varieties Listed by Batty*[a]	*Number of Genuine Pairs of Halfpence Dies Recorded in Peck's Listing*[b]
1747	5	2
1770	26	8
1771	55	11
1772	54	12
1773	93	10
1774	87	7

[12] C. Wilson Peck, *English Copper, Tin and Bronze Coins in the British Museum 1558–1950* (London, 1960).

[13] James Atkins, "Imitations of the Regal Coinage," *The Tradesmen's Tokens of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1892), p. 385.

1775	252	4
1776	8	
1777	4	
1778		
1781	4	
1784	1	
1785		
1786		
1787	1	
1788		
Total	590	54

[a] For each variety the obverse die and reverse die are described, and the same obverse or reverse die is sometimes used on more than one variety.

[b] No genuine halfpence were struck for circulation during the years 1776 though 1788.

Examination of the Table reveals that Batty did not encounter any variety of a 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence. He was also unaware of any American made counterfeits dated 1778 or 1788. He did find an American made counterfeit dated 1784 (Vlack 14-84A) and only one (Vlack 17-87B) out of ten varieties of the American made counterfeits dated 1787. The description in Batty's text of the five varieties of 1747 halfpence clearly described the one American made counterfeit (Vlack 1-47A). In his descriptions of 1776 and 1777 counterfeits, none include any of the varieties attributed by Vlack to American origin.

The omission in the Batty listing of the many varieties of counterfeits which were made in or exported exclusively to America is clearly evident. His failure to be aware of any 1785 counterfeit halfpence leads to the logical conclusion that such pieces did not circulate in England and that if they were coined in England they were specifically for American use and promptly exported to America for that purpose.

Ernest Bramah, an English researcher familiar with Batty's work, observed, "1785. A genuine halfpenny of the first issue type bearing this date is said to be in existence."[14] But he had never seen an example and said it would probably be a forgery. He may have read or have

[14] Ernest Bramah [Smith], *A Guide to the Varieties and Rarity of English Copper Coins, 1671–1860* (London, 1929), p. 67, n.

been advised of the Betts findings. In a 1944 supplement on the subject of English copper coinage prepared from his notes, there is no mention of the 1785 halfpence, but the 1788 halfpence was described as an "absurd date" in the category of "Forgeries of Remarkable Kinds."[15]

L. F. Hammond, a collector of English copper pieces including counterfeits, in a 1929 address did not mention any 1785 counterfeits but illustrated and described as rare the 1784 counterfeit halfpence (Vlack 14-84A) as his item 65.[16] This was from the same American made counterfeit dies which Batty had recorded.

No 1785 halfpence have been reported in English collections and none is known to have been found in England. The 1785 dated pieces now known in America all have had an American source. The only auction or other sale catalogue located naming a 1785 halfpence is the Jess Peters mail bid sale of April 20, 1965 (Decatur, IL), in which lot 495 included 17 different dates of British halfpence.

THE REASON FOR EXPORT

That quantities of counterfeit British halfpence were pouring into the United States in 1785 is confirmed in the January 11, 1786, *Massachusetts Centinel* which stated "scarce a British vessel arrives in any port on the Continent but what it brings very great quantities of rap[17] half pence." *The Massachusetts Centinel* of December 21, 1785, and *The Continental Journal and the Weekly Advertiser* of December 22, 1785, both stated that "quantities of what are called coppers, but of a baser metal passing, should put people on guard, not only to prevent being cheated, but to stop their circulation." The increase in counterfeit British halfpence during 1785 is mentioned in the *Massachusetts Spy* of March 16, 1786, which said in regard to American and British struck counterfeits:

[15] Ernest Bramah [Smith], "A Supplement to English Regal Copper Coins," ed. M. [Thomas Olive Mabbott], *Numismatic Review* 1, no. 4 (March 1944), p. 16.

[16] L. F. Hammond, "English Copper Coins and Counterfeits," *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society* 10 (Croydon, 1929), pp. 94–109.

[17] The word "rap" means of little value; the term was also applied to Irish halfpence.

> A large number of counterfeit Copper Coin manufactured in this and the Neighboring States, has lately been in circulation in this Commonwealth but it is now generally refused as currency by the trading part of the community; nearly one half of the copper coin in this country for the twenty or thirty years past has been of a base kind, manufactured in Birmingham in England; however it crept into circulation, and did, until the late additional quantity made its appearance, pass for the same value as those which were genuine.

An inducement to the importation of counterfeit copper coin in 1785 was the expiration on November 1, 1785, of the 1750 Massachusetts Act prohibiting importation or knowingly passing counterfeit copper coins. There was no new Massachusetts law on the subject for eight months thereafter and this amounted to an open window encouraging counterfeit copper coin imports. Perhaps that is what causes "the late additional quantity" referred to in the above excerpt.

The Continental Congress found that a similar situation as to copper coins had occurred when the October 16, 1786, Ordinance for the Establishment of the Mint of the United States was passed with the following references to past practices:

> The great quantities of base copper coin daily imported into or manufactured within the several states, is become so highly injurious to the interest and commerce of the same, as to require the immediate interposition of the powers vested by the confederation in the United States Congress, assembled of regulating the value of copper, the coin so current as aforesaid.
>
> That no foreign coin whatsoever, shall after the first day of September 1787 be current within the United States.

An unsigned and unsubmitted work paper prepared in connection with Alexander Hamilton's report to the U.S. House of Representatives on Jan. 28, 1791, "On the Establishment of a Mint," commented on the quality and quantity of counterfeit British halfpence, "manufactured at Birmingham," shipped to the United States "for our use" after 1783:

> The coinage of copper is a subject that claims our immediate attention. From the small value of the several pieces of copper coin, this medium of exchange has been too much neglected. The more valuable metals are daily giving place to base British halfpence, and no means are used to prevent the fraud. This disease,

which is neglected in the beginning, because it appears trifling, may finally prove very destructive to commerce. It is admitted that copper may, at this instant, be purchased in America at one-eighth of a dollar the pound.

British half-pence, made at the tower, are forty-eight to the pound. Those manufactured at Birmingham, and shipped in thousands for our use, are much lighter, and they are of base metal. It can hardly be said that seventy-two of them are worth a pound of copper; hence it will follow, that we give for British half-pence about six times their value. There are no materials from which we can estimate the weight of half-pence, that have been imported from Britain since the late war; but we have heard of sundry shipments being ordered, to the nominal amount of one thousand guineas; and we are told that no packet arrives from England without some hundred weight of base half-pence. It is a very moderate computation which states our loss, on the last twelve months, at 30,000 dollars, by the commerce of vile coin. The whole expense of a mint would not have amounted to half of that sum, and the whole expense of domestic coinage would remain in the country.

AMERICAN CATALOGUING AND DESCRIPTIONS

Since the Betts publication in 1886 no American cataloguer has included any mention of the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence, but counterfeit halfpence of other dates were finally added to catalogues beginning in 1965. The Scott American coin catalogues and the Wayte Raymond catalogues made no reference to counterfeit halfpence.

The discovery of the 1776 counterfeit halfpence (Vlack 9-76B) coined by James Atlee was the basis for this author's 1958 article which demonstrated two major interlocks of the American made counterfeit halfpence with the Vermont and Connecticut coppers other than by mulings.[18] Robert A. Vlack in 1965 was the first cataloguer to undertake a comprehensive listing of those varieties of counterfeit British style halfpence having an American origin. This grew out of

[18] Eric P. Newman, "A Recently Discovered Coin Solves a Vermont Numismatic Enigma," *ANSCent* (New York, 1958), pp. 531–42.

Vlack's preparation and distribution in 1964 of photographic plates entitled "Tory Halfpence" which were revised and reissued privately in 1974 as "Early English Counterfeit Halfpence Struck in America," using illustrations from the collections of the ANS, Theodore Craige, Eric P. Newman, and Robert A. Vlack. No 1785 pieces were included in his catalogue or plates.

Kenneth E. Bressett added a paragraph describing American made counterfeit British style halfpence to the twenty-fifth edition of the "Red Book" in 1972.[19] Don Taxay listed them in his "Scott Catalogue."[20] No counterfeit halfpence dated 1785 were mentioned in either publication. In 1976 this author made reference to the 1785 counterfeit halfpence in giving a general overview of the history of genuine and counterfeit British halfpence which circulated in America.[21]

The recent revival of research on the 1785 counterfeits was the result of James C. Spilman stimulating and nurturing early American numismatic matters by publishing *The Colonial Newsletter*. In June 1981 he included what he called "The Annotated Betts" and in the margin opposite the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence he inquired: "Unknown today?" "Perhaps same die as Vlack obverse 15 which is muled with 1787 Immune Columbia?"

The unequivocal answer to both questions is no. Then in *The Colonial Newsletter* for June 1985 Mike Ringo and Gary A. Trudgen[22] reported the reappearance of the 1785 counterfeit halfpence variety Betts had described which caused comment in the October 1985 issue by James L. Spilman and Eric P. Newman about the Yale piece, by Gary A. Trudgen about letter punch comparisons to Connecticut coppers, and by Michael Oppenheim about the need for expanded research on counterfeit coppers.[23]

[19] R. S. Yeoman, *A Guide Book of United States Coins*, 25th ed. (Racine, WI, 1972), pp. 25–26.

[20] Don Taxay, *The Comprehensive Catalogue and Encyclopedia of United States Coins*, 1st ed. (New York, 1971), p. 21; 2nd ed. (1975), pp. 32–33.

[21] Newman (above, n. 6), p. 171.

[22] Mike Ringo and Gary A. Trudgen, technical note 101, *The Colonial Newsletter* 70 (June 1985), p. 901.

[23] *The Colonial Newsletter* 71 (Oct. 1985), pp. 912–14.

CONCLUSION

When consideration is given to the following facts:

1. there was a desperate need for copper coins for circulation in the United Stated in 1785;
2. large quantities of counterfeit British halfpence were being shipped to the United States in 1785;
3. the first minting of copper coins by the state franchised coiners of Vermont and Connecticut occurred in 1785;
4. the first importation of Constellatio Nova copper coinage into the United States took place in late 1785 or early 1786;
5. the dies for all varieties of counterfeit British halfpence dated 1785 are made from the same set of punches;
6. the punches used on the dies for counterfeit British halfpence dated 1785 are also found on a counterfeit Irish George III halfpence obverse;
7. no dies used for 1785 counterfeit British halfpence are muled with any other known dies;
8. there is no evidence that the counterfeit British halfpence dated 1785 were coined in America;
9. no other coins similar to British halfpence (including evasion halfpence and Irish halfpence) are dated 1785;
10. 1785 counterfeit British halfpence were prepared during or immediately before the year of their dating;
11. the first numismatic report of the existence of counterfeit British halfpence dated 1785 took place in the United States in 1886;
12. in Great Britain sophisticated collectors and writers had no knowledge of the existence of 1785 counterfeit British halfpence until at least 1929;
13. the few known counterfeit British style halfpence dated 1785 have been found in worn condition in the United States;

then a conclusion must be drawn under "alternative 2" that the counterfeit British halfpence dated 1785, coined in the British Isles, were exclusively and specifically for American circulation and thus should be included as early coins of America in future cataloguing.

1785 COUNTERFEIT BRITISH HALFPENCE DIE VARIETY DETAIL

The obverses of the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence dated 1785 contain the standard British legend found on genuine pieces dated from 1770 through 1775, GEORGIVS · III · REX·, and the bust facing right. The reverses contain the standard British legend, BRITAN NIA ·, and the seated figure of Britannia, but carry the date 1785. The obverse designations are arranged so as to coordinate with Vlack's designations[24] and the reverse designations use the last two numbers of the date as Vlack used at this author's suggestion.

OBVERSES

Obverse Designations	*Description*	*Combined with Reverse*
50	Top ribbon end points to right end of middle crossbar of E of GEORGIVS. Left base of each R is complete with serif on each side. Each G has a substantial crossbar. Diagonal rising from left base of X is thinner than diagonal rising from right base. Stop after REX nearer X than bust.	85A
51	Top ribbon end points to right end of middle bar of E in GEORGIVS. Each G has a substantial crossbar. Right end of left base of each R is missing due to use of broken punch. Continuation radially of center line of third I in III would hit tip of nose.	85B 85C
52	Top ribbon points to serif on left side of base of E in GEORGIVS. Right end of left base of each R is missing due to use of broken punch. Second G has an insignificant crossbar compared to crossbar on first G. Bow loop radially under R and right side of O.	85A 85C

[24] See above, n. 7.

REVERSES

Reverse Designations	*Description*	*Combined with Obverse*
85A	Sprig points to base of right upright of N. Left base of R is complete with serif on each side. Right arm points to right side of T.	50 52
85B	Top of sprig almost touches lower right end of left base of N and points to left side of right base of N. Right end of left base of R is missing due to use of broken punch. Irregularly thick die break along circumference between 12 and 1 o'clock. Die break behind head. Right arm points to center of base of T.	51
85C	Sprig points far to right of N. Lower right end of left base of R is missing due to use of broken punch. Right arm points to center of A. Lower base line is very faint.	51 52

The weights in grams of the 1785 counterfeit halfpence examined are variety 50-85A, 7.92; variety 51-85B, 7.04, 7.29; variety 51–85C, 7.21, 7.63; variety 52–85A, 9.45; variety 52–85C, 7.55.

These conform to the weight of most counterfeit coppers circulating during the period and are well below the British standard of genuine pieces of 9.86 g (152.2 grains). The report of the Board of Treasury of the United States in April 1786 determined that "coppers" should weigh 157.5 grains (10.21 g) each and that if U.S. cents were coined they should be of that weight. The weight standard set by the United States was thus intended to be higher than that of genuine British halfpence and very much higher than the counterfeits in common circulation in America.

COUNTERFEITS DATED 1781

The circumstances concerning the striking of the 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence contrast with similar counterfeits dated 1781 (Plate 21, 40–44, 81A–E). There are no known counterfeit British style halfpence dated 1779, 1780, 1782, or 1783 and thus 1781 is an isolated year. Betts in 1886 mentioned that the Yale collection had one 1781 counterfeit so it is proper to assume from that and other 1781 pieces subsequently found in American accumulations that some 1781 counterfeits had been in circulation in America. Batty in England had listed four different varieties of 1781 counterfeits (2822–25), the last two of which were cast in copper instead of being struck pieces. These castings were apparently not made from originally carved patterns for molds but were produced from circulated struck counterfeits dated 1781 pressed into sand to make molds and repeatedly reused. Indeed, they may be from the same struck variety with different casting flaws. There are five varieties now known of the counterfeit British halfpence dated 1781. All such 1781 pieces known appear to be made from the same set of device and letter punches and these punches differ from the corresponding set of punches used on the dies for the 1785 counterfeits. The 1781 pieces all have a British Union clearly cut into the shield.

The situation as to the 1781 dated counterfeits is therefore substantially different from that of the 1785 pieces. Counterfeits dated 1781 were found in England having circulation wear and Batty and other English collectors recorded them. There were 18 evasion halfpence varieties dated 1781 listed by Atkins with various legends relating to Hebrides, Hibernia, North Wales, etc. The North American Token is dated 1781 but was prepared in the nineteenth century for Canadian use. A possible reason for using the 1781 date on counterfeit British halfpence was the revival in 1781 of the striking at the Royal Mint in London of genuine Irish halfpence of that date, the last prior genuine Irish halfpence coinage having been dated 1776. It appears that the 1781 counterfeits were struck in Great Britain in 1781 and circulated there until quantities of counterfeit halfpence of various dates including some 1781 pieces were thereafter accumulated and exported to America to make a profit on the differential in circulating value. Thus the 1781

counterfeit halfpence are not exclusively American as the 1785 counterfeit halfpence are.

VARIETIES OF 1781 STRUCK COUNTERFEIT BRITISH HALFPENCE

OBVERSES

Obverse Designation	*Description*	*Combined with Reverse*
40 (Batty 3822)	Top ribbon tip under right side of E. Bottom ribbon tip under center of right upright of G.	81A
41 (Batty 3823)[25]	Top ribbon tip under center of base of E. Bottom ribbon tip under left side of right upright of G.	81B
42	Top ribbon tip under center of bifurcation of upright of E. Bottom ribbon tip under left side of upright of G.	81C
43	Top ribbon tip under center of upright of E. Bottom ribbon tip under left end of crossbar of G.	81D
44	Top ribbon tip under right side of upright of E. Bottom ribbon tip under left end of crossbar of G.	81E

REVERSES

Reverse Designation	*Description*	*Combined with Obverse*
81A (Batty 3822)	Tip of center upper leaf of sprig under right end of left base of N. Tip of left upper leaf of sprig under left part of left base of N. Arm points to right side	40

[25] Batty 3824 and 3825 are casts from molds made from struck pieces. Both may be from the same variety with different casting flaws or from different obverses and/or reverses.

Obverse Designation	*Description*	*Combined with Reverse*
	of base of T. Figures of date clear of baseline. Lower end of spear just left of top of first 1 of date.	
81B (Batty 3823)	Tips of left and center upper leaves under right base of A. Arm points to left end of base of T. Figures of date clear of baseline. Lower end of spear over space between 17 of date. Stop after NIA at height of crossbar of A.	41
81C	Right tip of right serif on right base of A over tip of top leaf of sprig. Tip of left upper leaf of sprig under crotch of right base of A. Arm points to left side of base of T. First 1 of date clear of baseline; 8 touches it; 7 and 1 overlap it. Lower end of spear over first 1 of date. Stop after NIA is just above baseline of letters.	42
81D	Tips of left and center upper leaves of sprig under left base of N. Arm points to right side of upright of T. Figures of date clear of baseline. Two lines of baseline are merged at right end. Lower end of spear over space between 17 of date.	43
81E	Tip of top leaf of sprig points to left end of left base of N. Tip of top leaf of sprig under space between A and N. Arm points to left end of base of T. Date clear of baseline. Lower end of spear over space between 1 and 7 of date.	44

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My appreciation for cooperation in the preparation of this article goes to Kenneth E. Bressett, Joseph R. Lasser, Philip L. Mossman, Michael Oppenheim, Mike Ringo, Mary Sauvain, James L. Spilman and Gary A. Trudgen. Photographs and weights of any 1785 counterfeit British style halfpence sent to the author, care of the ANS, would be appreciated so that further data on the subject can be assembled; comments are also welcome.

Plate 24

1785

50

85A

52

85B

51

85C

1781

40

41

42

81A

81B

81C

43

81D

44

81E

Varieties of Counterfeit British Style Halfpence dated 1785 and 1781

Irish obverse/brockage

British 50

British 51

Irish

British 52

Counterfeit British Style and Irish Style Halfpence Detail